

JUST BEHIND THE FRONT  
IN FRANCE

*By* NOBLE FOSTER HOGGSON



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2<sup>E</sup> EMPRUNT

DE

LA DEFENSE NATIONALE

*Souscrivez*

POUR LA FRANCE  
VERSEZ VOTRE OR



L'Or Combat Pour La Victoire



JUST BEHIND THE FRONT  
IN FRANCE









A GARDEN SHELL-HOLE

THE placid surface of this artificial lake conceals the wound torn in an Alsatian garden by a shrieking German shell which fell short of its intended mark. But this section of Alsace is French once more, and the quaint, walled-in gardens will blossom on French soil, and in time the scars of Prussian shells will be obliterated by the growth of luxuriant vines.



JUST  
BEHIND THE FRONT  
IN FRANCE

By  
NOBLE FOSTER HOGGSON  
*Member of the*<sup>11</sup>  
American Industrial Commission to France



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TO  
LAURENCE BENÉT



## PREFACE

CAN you picture a traveler returning home after a long absence? At every home-nearing hour he recalls the home scenes as he last saw them, and thinks of the dear ones that he left. His mind tells him that he must be prepared for great changes, but his heart refuses to listen.

The France that I had left five years ago was full of youth, of joy, of contentment, a land of sun-kissed hills, of velvety meadows and of purple vineyards, a land filled with the songs and laughter of children and the smiles of gentle women.

On my return I found her sadly changed. She had suddenly aged. The joy and contentment were gone, and in their place were intense suffering and profound sorrow.

The fiery ordeal through which she had passed had left its ugly scars but it had also tempered her and made her finer and stronger. Where she had lost materially she had gained spiritually. She stands to-day erect and proud, confident and determined, her face illumined by the glory of a great faith that in the ultimate outcome of the tremendous struggle hers will be the victory.

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

It was my rare privilege to be a member of the American Industrial Commission which, in the fall of 1916, visited France to study the existing industrial conditions of that country, and to learn how the United States might best help to heal some of the deep, exhausting wounds of the war.

We were received as brothers, with open arms and open hearts. All doors were opened to us that we might enter and see how France was living up to her ideals. Everywhere was the evidence of a splendidly united and organized nation; a nation of calm, resourceful, efficient, untiring, resolute people. We were amazed by the fortitude of both the men and women throughout the country. The women in all vocations, by their loyalty and zeal, were making it possible, perhaps as much as were the men through their strength and their heroism, for France to take her invincible stand against an overwhelming and better prepared enemy.

It has been said that "the hour always makes the man." This war has made the women of France. Their development has been a wonderful revelation of the vast latent reserve power of the nation. While the war has not created this power, it has roused it and revealed to the world its silent potency.

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

The greatest tragedy ever set upon the world's stage is now being enacted. The testimony of every eye-witness containing an accurate description of even a small detail is, as it were, a little side-light that helps to illumine the whole scene. It is with this thought that I have ventured to set down my impressions gained at close range—not a story of the war, but rather of the brooding spirit of the war—a description of the condition and atmosphere of the country and the effect of the war upon the people "Just Behind the Front in France."





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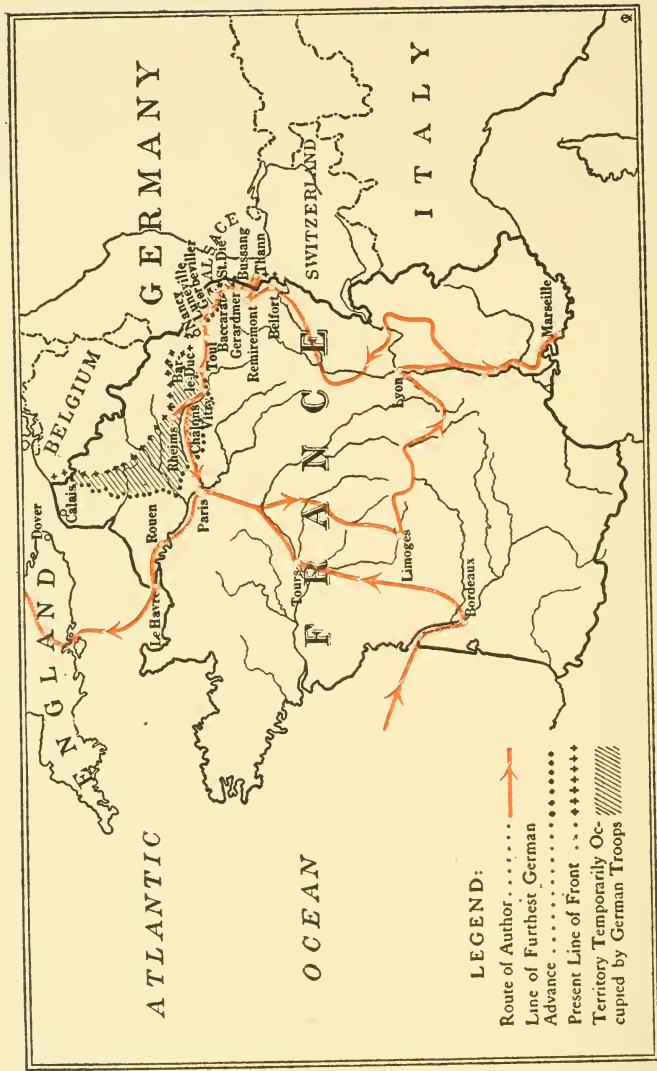
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IN FRANCE



The line of battle front is represented as it was at the time of the visit of the author in the Fall of 1916



## CHAPTER I

### WITHIN THE WAR ZONE

“GENTLEMEN,” remarked our president, as we sat one morning sipping our coffee in the cheerless café of the Hotel de l’Europe in Besançon, “we have to-day finished the program planned for ‘The American Industrial Commission to France.’”

“Since our arrival in Bordeaux four weeks ago, we have visited most of the principal cities and towns outside of the invaded districts, and have gathered the necessary material for our report.

“We are now on the threshold of the war zone, and through the courtesy of the French military authorities, the commissioners are invited to make a six days’ visit along the battle-front, from Belfort to Rheims.

“Some danger in such a trip must be admitted, and I feel it necessary to request that each member of the Commission shall assume the responsibility for his own safety if he accepts the invitation.”

A discussion resulted. Arguments arose as to the ease with which the deadly gas travels at

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times ten and even fifteen miles back of the trenches. Some spoke of the target which six army automobiles traveling together would present for the bombs of the German airmen, while others mentioned that our itinerary as planned would take us uncomfortably close to the enemy's lines, where we would be part of the time in danger from shells and aero bombs.

However, the consuming desire to see this great world war at closer range naturally prevailed. The Commissioners, keenly expectant, voted unanimously to go to the "front." As it proved, an almost continuously overcast sky eliminated most of the possible danger.

. . . . .

In a cold, driving rain, and filled with the memories of our long, interesting ride from Besançon, we rolled through the clean, washed streets of Belfort and stopped at Le Grand Hotel, the entrance of which was badly scarred and many of the windows broken by shrapnel. The upper story was damaged by bombs.

With a thrill I realized that I was at last in the war zone, that I had crossed the threshold from a land of peace and quiet into a turmoil of war,



### CAVE-DWELLERS

**T**HERE are hundreds of underground homes in French villages within range of gun-fire. But the spirits of these actual cave-dwellers are not to be daunted, and the German shells, which have driven these good, merry, optimistic people below the surface of the earth, cannot wholly quench their cheerfulness, which is evidenced by the festal flowers in this war-scourged family's cellar home.



## WITHIN THE WAR ZONE

death and destruction. Soon I would see for myself what this greatest of all struggles meant; would have glimpses of the brave fighting men of France; would see the trenches, and, still more interesting, the elaborate machinery with which this dauntless nation was keeping and caring for her vast army at the front.

In my interesting trip through different sections of France, I had seen thousands of French troops, innumerable German prisoners, hospitals filled with wounded, and had visited many of the important ammunition plants. But it was only on reaching Belfort, sixteen miles from the front, that I actually realized the proximity of the Great War.

Commanding as it does the passage between the Vosges and the Jura, Belfort, a town of about thirty thousand inhabitants, and a fortress of the first class, occupies a most important strategic position. It is situated among the wooded hills on the Savoureuse River, at the intersection of the railway lines from Lyons to Mulhouse and Strasbourg. Since the beginning of the war Belfort has continued to suffer from the shells of the big German howitzers—guns such as were used against Verdun—and from bombs dropped by airmen.

In our walk about the town, we found great

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numbers of buildings severely damaged and many completely destroyed. All but a few of the shops were closed, the heavy iron shutters down and the shopkeepers gone to a more congenial climate in the south of France where business is still possible.

The railway depot was being used as a sort of business exchange. It was here that the merchants met and transacted business with representatives of concerns from outside the war zone.

The negotiations concluded, the representatives departed by the route they came. No one was allowed in the city without complete military and identification papers.

In the streets were evidences only of war. Infantry, artillery and cavalry with full equipment marched by in the drenching rain. Supply trains, post trains and ambulances moved in an ever-flowing stream towards the front.

On the walls of many of the buildings were pasted printed notices to the effect that, in case of bombardment, there would be found accommodations in the caves or cellars under the houses for a limited number of persons. It seemed to me that I had found a city of troglodytes when I learned that ninety per cent. of the present population were still living in the cellars to which they had

## WITHIN THE WAR ZONE

descended for safety at the beginning of the war.

Well might the people of Belfort fear the German shells, for they were well aware that the Huns had, but a few miles away, two 420-mm. guns (about 16 inches) ranged exactly on the city and that it was possible with these to reduce Belfort to ruins in a few days.

While two months had passed since the last big German shell fell in the city, bombs had been dropped at very frequent intervals, and when I witnessed the havoc caused by these instruments of death and destruction I understood the willingness with which the poor inhabitants still adhered to their none too comfortable quarters below ground.

Above the city, as though to guard it from all harm, crouches the great "Lion of Belfort," chiseled out of the face of the cliff upon which stands the Citadel. "How splendidly it represents the courage and spirit of these indomitable people," remarked my companion as we returned from our walk. "When Bartholdi finished his great carving in commemoration of the noble defence made by the French troops in the Franco-Prussian War, he little thought that in less than



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fifty years the Lion would be a silent witness to another successful resistance by the valiant sons of Lorraine in the greatest conflict the world has ever known."

We were cramped, cold and hungry when we entered the hotel. Our hopes of finding hot food and cozy warmth within appeared vain. A cold snack and an "early to bed" were apparently scheduled for us. There was no heat, electric light or comfort. The iron shutters over the windows excluded the already meagre daylight, and the few lighted candles seemed only to accentuate the gloom which shrouded the place. Two venerable maids and a couple of old men, the latter sufficiently advanced in years for them to have fought in the last Prussian War, were all that were available to care for our party and the small group of French officers which arrived shortly after us.

It was a dispirited group that sat in their overcoats in the cold and dismal hotel lobby. No conversation brightened the occasion; no one felt inclined to talk; a most dejected spirit pervaded us until the doors of the dining-room suddenly opened and one of the old waiters announced dinner.



### THE LION OF BELFORT

THE triumphantly defiant "Lion of Belfort," chiseled from sheer walls of solid stone by Bartholdi, to honor the memorable defense of the place by the French in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The figure of the lion itself is seventy-eight feet long and fifty-two feet high. Above is the citadel overlooking the valley. Belfort is chiefly important because of its value as a military strategic point, and as a position of defense commands a perimeter of twenty-five miles. Since the beginning of the war ninety per cent. of the population has slept in cellars.



## WITHIN THE WAR ZONE

The vision of a cold supper immediately disappeared with the pleasant odor of well-cooked viands and the grateful warmth of the candle-lighted room. Our spirits revived and we were soon enjoying a simple but delicious repast of which we all felt in much need. A pleasing feature of the dinner was the "Sessyll" wine which one of our thoughtful French friends had brought with him from Annecy. The wine is made in Sessyll, a short distance from Annecy, and is not shipped. It is light, fruity, and when aged in the wood for ten years compares well with old Madeira.

From a small table at the other side of the room, I watched with keen interest the faces of the men who, in neat horizon-blue uniforms sat at the long middle table. Strong, grim faces they were. The strain of war had left its traces in the expression of the eyes and in the lines about the mouth, but a stern determination and the spirit of a great faith were apparent in each.

We were smoking our after-dinner cigars when a lieutenant of the Lafayette Escadrille approaching us remarked: "It is good to meet someone from my own country. I am sometimes lonesome here. When you return home, please give

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my love to my father, and tell him that I was well and happy when you saw me in Belfort."

The speaker was Norman Prince, an American in the French flying corps who had distinguished himself by his bravery and daring. Four days after we left Belfort we learned of his death in an air raid over the German lines.

. . . . .

There was small comfort in remaining up and soon one after another said his "Good night" and started to search for his room.

A floating wick in a glass of sweet oil gave a dim, uncertain light to the corridors and I needed my electric pocket lamp to navigate the stairs in safety. Inside my bedroom, a printed military order posted on the wall prohibited the use of a light unless the iron shutters were kept closed and the louvres in them stuffed with paper or other material.

It was not without some misgiving that I extinguished my candle and closed my eyes to go to sleep, for we had been told by one of the officers that the Germans were probably aware of the arrival of our six cars and would drop bombs on the city that night in the hope of breaking up

what they might think to be an important conclave of officers.

When I recalled the complete destruction of many of the buildings and the frequency with which the Germans either shelled or bombed the city, my approval and envy of the cave-dwellers grew to large proportions. I curled up under the 4 x 4 down quilt and slipped into dreamland, reassuring myself by the smallness of target which I presented in my uncomfortable position.

The success of my night's sleep can, no doubt, be credited to the storm in which we arrived—the heavy, low clouds preventing the German airmen from discovering us. However, our presence in Belfort must in some way have been reported, for on the following night, after we had departed, twenty-five bombs were dropped upon the city, doing serious damage.







### THE ROAD TO THE FRONT

ON to the front for France and for victory! These heavy cannon, drawn by tractors over some of the best man-made roads in the world, make progress which would have astounded Napoleon, whose guard thundered its way toward Prussia over these very highways. The praises of the artificial roads of France will be sung by future historians—they have played a great role in saving the French country from possible annihilation.



## CHAPTER II

### ALONG THE ROAD FROM BELFORT TO THANN

THE sun was shining gloriously when I arose the next morning, and after a breakfast of fruit, eggs and coffee neatly served in the little breakfast-room looking on the street, I hurried into the waiting car and, once clear of the city, sped through beautiful country over a splendid road towards Remiremont.

Each of our big gray automobiles with numbers on sides and backs carried a sergeant and a military chauffeur on the front seat. If one car had trouble, all the cars stopped and all the chauffeurs helped to make it right. We then proceeded, each car always in its assigned place in line and containing the same occupants.

Many times we were stopped by sentries, and it developed from one of them that they all had the numbers of our cars and a description of each person.

The roads, which have had unceasing travel and wear for over two years of the war, compare favor-

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ably with those in the parks of our own country. The road-makers were busy in different sections, filling shell craters with the débris from the ruins of some nearby village, repairing the worn spots and top-dressing where necessary. Their heavy rollers and other machinery were in constant use, while they themselves smoked and worked on, indifferent to the incessant roar of the cannon or the shriek of the big shells which occasionally winged their way overhead.

In most of the paintings of historic battle scenes by such masters as Meissonier, Detaille and De Neuville, the roads depicted are filled with ruts made by the travel of the heavy guns and are often shown impassable. Doubtless these illustrated the actual conditions that existed at the time. But to-day, despite the ponderous and uninterrupted traffic which these roads just behind the front in France have sustained, they are almost perfect.

. . . . .

I had at first sight been pleased with the new color of the French army uniform, although with the thousands of other things to occupy my attention I had failed to realize its full effectiveness both in point of concealment and appearance until the

morning when, in approaching the village of Le Thillot, I saw a number of battalions *en masse*. The color so blended with the landscape that, until I had approached quite near, I failed to note the soldiers who were in plain view.

The baggy red trousers, short blue jacket and red cap, by which we have known the French soldier for many years, and which were the cause of unnecessary casualties at the beginning of this war are now of memory only. The new gray-blue garments, tight-fitting coat, knickerbockers and spiral puttees make, when finished off with the fatigue cap of the same material and color, one of the snappiest of uniforms.

While the French gray-blue, popularly termed "horizon blue," is a very difficult color to see against the horizon, it is not so good a protective coloring in all positions as the greenish-drab of the Germans. Whether on the way to the trenches or returning—under clear skies or in down-pouring rain—the French soldiers looked neat and trim, a showing seldom possible with the old uniform.

. . . . .

Ambulance parks occupied large sections in or near some of the towns through which we passed and from these parks ambulances were con-

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stantly hurrying on their journeys of mercy to and from the front. When a telephone order is received from the firing line, as many cars as needed are at once dispatched.

The ambulances are driven directly to the field dressing stations to which the wounded have been carried by stretcher-bearers, but if these stations happen to be in too exposed positions for the ambulances to reach them, the wounded, after a hasty dressing, are removed by stretcher to a field hospital situated a couple of miles back of the front trenches; often the churches in the towns back of the lines are used to great advantage for this purpose. The next move is to the base hospitals, which are located in the cities and towns some distance away. There the serious cases, which will not permit of further moving, are kept and cared for while the rest are sent to the special hospitals and convalescent camps in the southern part of France.

When one turned from the soldiers, the supply trains and ambulances, and looked upon this beautiful, sunny and tranquil country well back of the lines, it was difficult to believe that cities and towns were being wiped out of existence and



### THE JOURNEY BACK FROM "NO MAN'S LAND"

THE pain-racked journey back from "No Man's Land." Through the seemingly endless maze of the rear trenches, the wounded poilu is being borne by the stretcher-bearers to the field dressing station, from whence he will be removed by ambulance to the hospital a few miles away, out of range of the shells which shriek overhead.





thousands of lives sacrificed just over the blue hills in the distance.

The fields on either side of the broad, white road stretched away like fine, green lawns, starred with the blooms of innumerable crocuses. The fall rains and the change to the crisp, cool weather had turned the foliage golden, and the Vigne-Vierge (our Virginia creeper) hung in great crimson masses on walls and arbors. The crops had been garnered and the farms looked immaculate. Glimpsing into the gardens, I saw quantities of dahlias, asters and marigolds, sometimes a few late roses, blooming against protecting walls.

We soon entered Remiremont, an old thirteenth-century town pleasantly situated on the banks of the Moselle, and, while our papers were being examined, showed our impatience to reach the front where we could see the first-line trenches and "No Man's Land."

After a seemingly interminable time, our military papers were viséd and a change made in our orders, so that we might visit the city of Thann in Alsace, which had been wrested from the Germans after forty-five years of their occupancy.

A few miles out of the town we passed a troop of twenty or thirty boys and girls on the way

home from school. Their bright eyes, rosy cheeks and smiling faces were in strong contrast to the faces of the men and women we had seen working in the fields. In the latter were shown, all too plainly, the deep lines of anguish and care. Women were guiding the plow and the cultivator, sometimes using a team of sleek, dove-colored oxen, but often a single ox hitched to the plow by wooden shafts fastened to a head-piece in front of the horns.

In the late afternoon we passed within a short distance of the French lines and saw for the first time ugly barbed wire entanglements guarding well-constructed trenches.

As we approached Bussang the sun dipped behind the hills and the moon which had been absent for the past week rose in full glory and poured its silver over the beautiful valley of the Moselle. We soon lost its radiance, however, as we dashed into the mouth of the long tunnel of Bussang which cuts through the mountain and joins the villages of Bussang in the Vosges and Oderen in Alsace.

"When the Germans retreated through this tunnel," remarked Sergeant Forot from the front seat, "with our boys at their heels, they left a few

foresters at the eastern end for the purpose of exploding a mine and destroying the tunnel while we were on our way through. Some volunteers of our Chasseurs Alpains spoiled their plan by scaling the steep mountainside and shooting the foresters as they stood waiting with the switch in their hands."

Emerging from the tunnel, we zigzagged down the mountainside at a speed that seemed to predict certain destruction. The cars traveled about three hundred metres apart so that we should present as small a target as possible for the guns across the valley.

On reaching Thann in the valley below we were told by one of our officers that the mouth of the tunnel, and in fact the entire road down which we had just come, was kept in perfect range by the German batteries. Although it was difficult to add one extra thrill to those we had already experienced in our descent of the mountain, the fact now disclosed caused us to recall with a tinge of pleasure the speed with which we had dropped into the valley.





"THIS IS THANN"

CHAFING for forty-three years under the hated Prussian yoke, she is French again. The little town of Thann is one of the most picturesque in all Alsace. Snuggled cozily in the protection of wooded hills and nestled in the smiling valley, Thann, scarred by the ravages of war, sings not the "Hymn of Hate," but a psalm of joy—because she has come home, come home to France.



## CHAPTER III

### A VISIT INTO ALSACE

**T**HANN, whose few thousands of inhabitants have made their town important through the cotton, calico and silk industries as well as by the excellent wine they grow, is picturesquely situated in upper Alsace, sixteen miles from Mulhouse. Again in the hands of its rightful owners, it was with great joy that our French friends showed it to us.

“We cannot allow you to return to America without seeing this little lost child back in the arms of its mother,” exclaimed M. Damour, civilian leader of our expedition and chief of the French Industrial Commission to America, whose visit we were returning.

The square about the cathedral was quiet and peaceful—men, women and children promenading in the moonlight. The children were inquisitive and amused at the group of foreigners who had arrived without warning. They followed us as we picked our way through the streets which were choked with a mingled mass of stone, plaster and

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rubbish from the demolished buildings. Many families were living in partially destroyed homes, and once on turning an angle in the street I caught a glimpse of a dimly lighted cellar in which the household was gathered in some apparent comfort, while above and about their present humble abode lay waste and ruin as finished and complete as terminated the earthquake of Messina. However, we were surprised to find no indication of depression or sadness on the faces of these poor people who had reached, it would seem, the breaking point of suffering.

German names were above the doors of some of the shops still standing, though we found only "Ici on parle français" within.

"You are the advance guard of the tourists?" smilingly inquired a comely looking woman as we stepped into her tiny shop on the square. This was quite true, for we were the first foreign civilians to visit the town since this coveted land of Alsace had been reoccupied by the French.

The two famous old churches of Thann greatly interested me. They have been well described by G. P. De Frayne in *Les Arts* as follows:

"One of the most beautiful sections of Alsace has again become French territory. The charm





CHURCH OF SAINT THIEBALD

THE Church of Saint Thiebald of Thann in Alsace, begun in the Fourteenth Century, is one of the finest, loveliest and most striking examples of Gothic architecture extant. This beautiful cathedral, so exquisitely wrought, is a very part of the landscape over which it casts its soft shadows.



## A VISIT INTO ALSACE

of her Gothic churches is now doubly attractive to us. Two of them, especially those of Thann and of Vieux-Thann, deserve the particular notice of the artistic world at large. Built at the very threshold of the Alsatian plain, which is dominated by its lofty structure, the Church of Saint Thiebald of Thann harmoniously blends its pure lines with the surrounding hills; its rise of gray stone justifies the saying current in the Rhine-lands that the steeple of the Strasbourg Cathedral is the highest, that of Fribourg the bulkiest, but neither of them can rival in beauty the belfry of Thann.

“Our church, dedicated to St. Thiebald, has two remarkable west doors, beautifully carved pews, statues of great artistic value, and admirable stained-glass windows, which suffered, alas, from their contact with German shells. Begun in 1320, on the substructure of an older church, which dated from the twelfth century, the church of Thann was dedicated November 8, 1422, by the Archbishop of Besançon.”

When we were told that the German trenches were but 900 yards away, our voices at once dropped into whispers and we were willing to depart without further delay. Soon we were

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rushing back up the mountainside, past the mouth of the tunnel, on a road to the right leading toward Gerardmer.

Just after passing Eyrebus, tracks of a narrow-gauge railway paralleled the highway and on these rumbled along a number of trains drawn by tiny locomotives. Some cars, filled with soldiers, were sandwiched in between cars loaded with huge cases of foodstuffs and burly casks of wine.

Amazing cargoes these little toy trains carried as they slowly crawled through moonlight and shadow.

The sight of a large force of cavalrymen as we passed through Ranspack, busy with their horses, grooming and making them ready for the night, recalled to mind that in the early days of the war the cavalry was used for charging as in former times, but under the present conditions the loss in horses is so severe that a change has become necessary. When cavalry now go into action the horses are left behind, the men moving forward as infantry. In many instances cavalry are used as mounted infantry for rushing a force forward to support some portion of a line where reinforcements are badly needed.

Our day's journey ended in Gerardmer, a



#### IN LOVELY ALSACE

THANN, in Alsace, has lived and pursued the even tenor of its peaceful ways throughout the great war, always within range of the great German guns. Shells shriek overhead on their diabolic journey of destruction toward the French positions. Every now and then a tremendous steel messenger of death, whether by accident or design, drops and demolishes an inoffensive dwelling or smashes its way through the walls of a church.



## A VISIT INTO ALSACE

popular summer resort tucked away in a bowl in the beautiful Vosges mountains. The fine hotels, comfortable pensions and casino set off like brilliants the gem of a sapphire lake. A hot supper and plenty of good cheer awaited us at the Hotel de la Providence. The dining-room was bright and comfortable, and we lingered over our coffee and nuts until bedtime.

The intermittent booming of some big guns, not a great distance away, made sleep a truant for a while. However, I secured a good rest during the latter part of the night and arose in time to enjoy a delightful walk about the lake before breakfast.

Gerardmer, as a supply depot, was a special mark for the German airmen, who were in the habit of making regular visits to the town. One of these visits came off two days after our departure. Bombs were dropped from several enemy planes but no serious damage resulted.





## CHAPTER IV

### THE BATTLEFIELD OF COL DE LA CHIPOTTE

THE morning was glorious, and after a hurried breakfast we were soon on our way north towards Gerbelle. The sun bathing the broad valley of the Meurthe in its yellow light accented the red-tiled roofs of innumerable little villages which lay hushed and untroubled against the green of the meadow or the blue of the distant hills.

Numbers of French officers constantly passed in automobiles and on horseback. Long supply and post trains lumbered along at the side of the road.

We had just passed through a heavy forest of spruce, when we were obliged to stop to repair a blow-out, and while the chauffeurs were busy Sergeant Forot pointed to the hill near at hand on the right and remarked: "Just over beyond lie the Germans. We are close to the lines now and much of the country about us has been lost and won many times since the war began." His remark carried little weight with me, for in the

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midst of such peaceful surroundings war must be still a long way off.

Again on our way, we passed in an hour the Col du Bonhomme, where thousands of French and German lives were lost at the beginning, and where two great armies were even now contending for the summit. The hill was in plain sight, and the roar of cannon and the explosion of big shells as the battle was desperately fought made us realize our proximity to the active front. Many trenches and barbed wire entanglements protected the road on both sides.

Peculiar-looking "chevaux-de-frise" lay, in groups of six, at the side of the road. They were built of heavy timbers in the form of elongated sawbucks—were long enough to reach entirely across the road and were completely enmeshed in the heaviest of barbed wire. A half dozen of these ugly hurdles would cause serious delay to a troop of cavalry, especially if their position was supported by machine-guns.

Where houses and gardens occurred the barbed wire ran in tangled masses at the rear and sides and through the rows of vegetables and flowers.

When we reached the little old town of St. Dié with its red sandstone houses, we found it had

## THE BATTLEFIELD OF COL DE LA CHIPOTTE

suffered severely. Many buildings had been completely wrecked and there were evidences of fierce street fighting. The jambs and doors were riddled with bullet-holes, and the fronts of the houses smashed and torn by shrapnel.

The arches of the arcades in the principal streets were barricaded with sand-bags and at the end of the main street the stuccoed walls were pitted by thousands of machine-gun bullets. Many houses which escaped injury during the bombardment were set on fire by incendiary bombs in August and September, 1914, and all but their exterior walls destroyed.

An inscription on a marble tablet on the front of an old house in this town interested me greatly. The following is a translation:

“In this house on April 27, 1512, was suggested and printed in a magazine the name of ‘AMERICA’ as the proper name for the land which was discovered by Columbus a few years earlier.”

Beyond the town and on the road to Le Voire we saw for the first time the much-talked-of road screening. Spruce boughs, hung from wire which had been stretched between the shade trees on the right-hand side of the road, completely hid all

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

traffic from the eyes of the Germans who occupied positions across the valley.

Now that the war was not such "a long way off," this simple road screen seemed to me most satisfactory and comforting.

After a while we left the valley and climbed the Col de la Chipotte, where the desperate battle of the same name was fought. It has been set down as the most sanguinary among the early battles of the war. Sixty thousand French troops, after several days' fighting, succeeded in driving from the wooded hills a much larger force of Germans. They, however, paid dearly for the victory, for thirty thousand of France's best fighting men were lost.

The splendid forest that covered this hill was almost completely destroyed. In some sections the beautiful trees were stripped of tops and branches, and in others, the uprooted, splintered and broken trunks showed the effect as of a visit by a terrific hurricane.

In among the trees and stumps as far as one could see along the ridge were crosses marking the hurriedly dug graves of the dead soldiers. In some instances, where time did not permit the burial of each body separately, many were interred



### A TRIO OF RUDE CROSSES

THIS improvised cemetery marks the spot where was fought the sanguinary conflict of Col de la Chipotte. The trio of rude crosses is the silent reminder to humanity of the thirty thousand heroes who fell in this bloody battle and who are enshrined in the hearts of the people of France and all believers in true democracy.



## THE BATTLEFIELD OF COL DE LA CHIPOTTE

in long trenches. In some of these large graves as many as fifty heroes had at last found rest.

The Germans who fell here were buried by the French and the crosses which mark their graves bear the numbers taken from the wrist-bands and also a daub of yellow paint to distinguish them from the French, whose crosses are marked with red. Sometimes a cross is marked with two daubs of red or two daubs of yellow to indicate that two Frenchmen or two Germans share the same grave, and then there are some crosses which bear both red and yellow daubs.

Standing with uncovered head by the latter crosses, I pictured the poor bodies below still clinched as they had fallen in their hand-to-hand struggle for victory and peace, for which each had sacrificed all in life and which each had found only in death.

Descending the hill, we entered the deserted streets of the village of Roan l'Etape, where the buildings were almost entirely demolished. On either side of the highway beyond the village were many crosses, and it was noticeable that the fighting which was done here in August, 1914, was carried on without the use of trenches.

The little town of La Neuville, in the valley of

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

La Meuse, which we next visited, was in a sad state of undoing. The few houses which had been spared from shell-fire were occupied by those who had had the courage to come back after the retreat of the Germans. The rubbish had been cleared from some of the streets and a few shops were open. I seemed to feel something in the energetic movement and the determined faces of the few inhabitants which indicated a quick rehabilitation of the town when the opportunity permitted.

What looked at a distance to be great guns pointing heavenward, proved, as we drew near, to be the tall factory chimneys of Baccarat, the chief city of the French glass industry, situated on the River Meurthe, in the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle. The large plant of the Baccarat Company, an exhibition of whose beautiful glassware we had seen in Paris, is located here. I was told that the people of Baccarat tried to save their town from destruction by paying a large indemnity to the German general in command of the approaching forces. The success of their efforts was gratifying, but later a succeeding general, who had received no such inducement, thoroughly shelled the town and left it in its





### LAST RESTING-PLACE FOR THE BRAVE

NOT the Croix de Guerre, but the cross of peace. These rough-hewn crosses, in a cemetery at the French front, were set by their comrades above the mangled forms of thousands of poilus who died in the trenches for the cause of freedom and democracy. Cemeteries are only a little way behind the trenches, since there generally is neither time nor transportation facilities to permit the bodies to be carried into the interior. Above the identified dead, the crosses bear white numerals, but many of the graves contain nameless heroes, the crosses above them bearing no mark of identification.



## THE BATTLEFIELD OF COL DE LA CHIPOTTE

present state of demolition. Square after square of homes had been demolished and the cathedral had been sadly damaged.

On reaching the River Meurthe we found that the fine old stone bridge had been destroyed. We crossed on a temporary wooden structure.

As the morning advanced a cold wind began to blow. The sun disappeared behind an overcast sky and the day which had begun so bright and cheery became dreary and dismal.

After leaving Baccarat we passed for many miles through the battlefields of the Marne, one time within three miles of the place where the main struggle occurred. Everywhere that the eye rested were examples of destruction and havoc. Rudely constructed crosses, oftentimes of two sticks tied together, pathetically marked the innumerable graves.

By noon we arrived in Rambervilliers, an ancient industrial town of about six thousand inhabitants and situated on the bank of the Mortagne. The proprietor of the Hotel de la Poste cordially received us and cared for our comfort.

Luncheon over, we hurried on our way towards Lunéville, passing through what once had been

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

the villages of Menil and Magnières, but which now are only great piles of dust and rubbish.

The beautiful Gothic cathedral in Magnières has been completely shot to pieces, the roof gone and the side walls punctured with great gaping holes. The blackened remains of the houses give melancholy evidence of the torture by fire which these villages suffered in addition to the bombardment.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE, AND SISTER JULIE

WE arrived in Gerbevillier, now called "Gerbevillier-la-Martyre," in a cold, penetrating rain and found that Monsieur L. Mirman, Prefect of the Department of the Meurthe-et-Moselle, had come from Nancy to meet us and to show us the doleful ruins of this once attractive village.

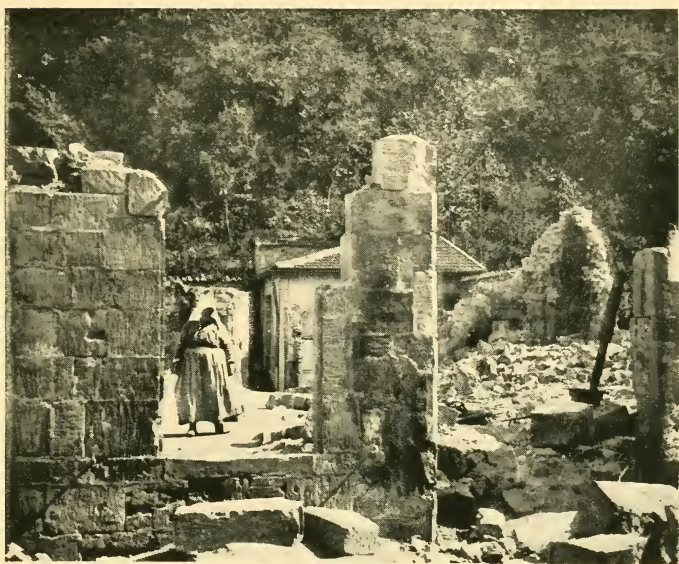
The best photographs can give but a faint idea of the complete violation and ravage which the Germans in their fury doled out to this poor town on the night they entered it. With the aid of oils and other inflammable materials, as well as explosives, they gratified their rage and made their work of wrecking complete. We were told that during that dreadful night of rapine and murder, these brutes, after setting fire to the houses, stood with smiling faces at the cellar entrances and greeted with coarse shouts the old men, women and children who, to escape roasting, came up into the streets only to be murdered by the bloodthirsty invaders.

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

There was something in the absolute desolation of the place, helped, no doubt, by the rain and the muddy streets through which we walked in great discomfort, that printed the picture of misery into my memory. Here, before my eyes, was the plain evidence of "the abomination that maketh desolate," mentioned in the Scriptures.

In the doorway of her ruined home stood an old woman who had refused the comfort of a temporary house that had been tendered, and had insisted upon living in what was left of her old home, the cellar, which was reached by a narrow, winding path through great high drifts of rubbish. On a shelf opposite the entrance door in her low, dark room were some German spiked helmets, an officer's sword, a few time-fuse shells, many clips of cartridges and shrapnel bullets—souvenirs of those terrible days in which Gerbevilliers struggled and died. Her story of suffering, told in a voice of despair, was painful to listen to, and after buying from her a brass time-fuse from a German shell which she had found in the ruins of her home, I left with tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat.

Temporary wooden houses have been built outside of the village, and in these the destitute families will be quartered until their village has



"HOMELESS"

THE savage warrior comes to once peaceful Gerbevillier. This old woman, gazing in stupefaction on the remains of her house, is a typical sight in this ancient village. Surrounded by the desolation of the shell-plowed desert that once was forest and field, orchard and garden, she refuses to leave what is left of her home. And, thrifty soul that she is, she is storing away relics of the war to sell to the curio-seeking tourists after the conflict ends.





## THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE, AND SISTER JULIE

been rebuilt. In building the permanent houses the design and size of the old ones will be adhered to as far as practicable, but modern sanitation, ventilation and lighting will be introduced.

These emergency farmhouses are about twenty-five by thirty-five feet and contain a living-room and two bedrooms in front and a stable behind.

They are of wood construction and cost fifty-five hundred francs each. The refugees at present pay the nominal sum of one franc per year for rent. Houses for artisans are being built in blocks or rows. These are framed in wood and have roofs and sides covered with asbestos tiles. The cost of these block houses is approximately twenty-seven hundred francs per family.

Now that the ancient French tax on windows and doors has been removed, it is possible with the introduction of light and ventilation to make headway against the scourge of tuberculosis with which the peasants of France have been sadly afflicted.

When this village has been rebuilt it is the hope of Prefect Mirman that it can be used as an example for rebuilding many of the destroyed villages and towns in the devastated regions.

Two most interesting documents, the Desplas

and the Cornudet bills, the former introduced in the Chamber of Deputies, while the latter was passed by the Chamber last spring, will be important factors in the rebuilding of the towns and villages in the devastated regions.

In its preamble the Desplas bill sets forth that while in all previous wars governments have disclaimed responsibility for damages caused to individuals, they must now assume such responsibility, and every person in France should contribute his share toward repairing the damage. This bill aims to provide the method of awarding these damages.

No limit is placed as to the total amount that shall be spent. In general, the bill pledges the Government to pay the owner what it would have cost to repair his damage or reconstruct his building with materials and labor reckoned at rates current at the time the damage took place. If the cost of replacement is greater than the amount of the award, because of the advanced rates of materials and labor, the owner will have to pay the excess. As this excess amounts to probably fifty per cent. or more, a great deal of outside private help will be necessary.

The Cornudet bill relating to the reconstruction of all damaged towns and cities provides that



#### DOUBLY UNFORTUNATE GERBEVILLIER

THE sorry, doubly unfortunate village of Gerbevillier, which first felt the fierce hand of the onrushing German hordes, then the terrible fate of bombardment by its own countrymen, the French, who of necessity shelled the town to dislodge the Prussians. The population of the town is housed in temporary wooden structures erected outside the city itself, which is being planned on new and modern lines.



## THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE, AND SISTER JULIE

they shall be reconstructed along the lines of the most approved modern planning and that every community shall have a plan to which all changes or additions shall be made to conform. A number of special sections in the bill apply to the immediate reconstruction of destroyed towns.

. . . . .

Gerbevillier will be remembered in years to come not only for the heroic defense of the little bridge made at the beginning of the war by the handful of French soldiers against an overwhelming force of Germans, but also for the brave work done by Sister Julie in alleviating distress and suffering after the town fell into the hands of the enemy.

In September, 1914, when great hordes of Germans were forcing the French army south and Von Kluck was endeavoring to turn General French's right wing north of Paris, the German general at Lunéville sent a detachment of 12,000 men to take the village of Gerbevillier, nine miles away, as well as other small towns beyond, preparatory to the advance of his main army of 150,000.

The road from Lunéville approaching Gerbevillier crosses a bridge just outside of the village,

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

and the story, graphically told by one of the officers, of the heroic defense of this bridge by a company of Chasseurs Alpins and the description of Sister Julie's fearless deeds thrilled us through and through.

Anticipating the approach of the enemy, the French had barricaded the streets and had taken positions of vantage in and behind the buildings, firmly determined to hold the advance until their small force had been entirely annihilated.

Seventy-five Chasseurs Alpins with four mitrailleuses were concealed in a small house overlooking the river at the near end of the narrow bridge, which was not wide enough to accommodate two automobiles passing in opposite directions.

Though seemingly impossible, this valiant band, we were told, held in check twelve thousand German troops from ten o'clock in the morning until four in the afternoon, when, with ammunition depleted, they could no longer prevent the Huns from making a crossing.

With the morning sun glinting brightly on helmet and bayonet, the Boches swung down the road, singing lustily as they advanced.

In close formation they solidly packed the bridge on which were trained the mitrailleuses from the house on the bank above.



### AN ALERT MACHINE-GUN CREW

**R**EADY for the morning's interchange of compliments. The ever alert crew of a French machine-gun ready for the stern work of the day.





## THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE, AND SISTER JULIE

When the front ranks had just cleared the bridge, the French captain gave the signal and the death-dealing streams of steel bullets played back and forth from one end to the other until all movement ceased and the dusty white roadbed was blotted out with a tangled mass of humanity clad in greenish-drab uniforms. The few who escaped that fearful ordeal joined those at the rear in a scramble up the hill.

After an half-hour's breathing spell, a detachment of cavalry attempted to make a crossing but met with no better success than had the infantry. Horses and riders were mercilessly mowed down, the impetus of the charge often carrying their bodies over the parapet and into the river below.

A long delay now occurred while the Germans brought a battery from Lunéville with which to destroy the little house. Either on account of the unfortunate position of the guns or because of poor marksmanship, the gunners failed to score a hit and were finally driven from their position by the accurate and ceaseless fire of the Chasseurs.

The Germans then turned their attention to an old château a short distance down the river, believing it to be filled with French troops.

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

When this most interesting and historical building had been partially demolished by shells, an attempt was made to cross the river by a foot-bridge near the château.

In the meantime the French had sent one of their machine-guns to cover this foot-bridge and the fire from this gun was so successful that the Germans were not only unable to cross the river but were obliged to withdraw their battery from its position.

Toward the close of the day the brave defenders, their ammunition spent, were compelled to give way to the rushing hordes who crossed the river and swarmed into the town. The Germans were angered and infuriated to the point of madness by the loss of over two hundred and fifty of their men and the delay of a whole day in their advance.

A night of carnage and butchery followed. All of the old men, women and children that could be found were murdered and their dwellings wrecked and burned.

When day dawned but eighteen buildings of the four hundred and seventy-five of which the village had boasted remained intact—the rest had been either utterly destroyed by explosives or by fire. The blackened sepulchers of once happy homes

## THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE, AND SISTER JULIE

stood silent and gaunt—the charred remains of the fallen roofs and floors, and of the furniture, still smouldered and smoked in the morning sunlight.

The Prefect told us that when he came into the town, immediately upon the retreat of the Germans, he found sixty women and children dead in the streets; not killed in the course of battle, but murdered by the German butchers.

The Hospice of Saint Charles, nestled in between two old dwellings, carried on its work of mercy under the direction of that wonderful woman, Sister Julie, of whom the whole world now knows.

On that horrible night when the Huns made shambles of the streets of Gerbevillier, there were many wounded soldiers lying in the dimly lighted wards of the Hospice. Here and there a German face, among the many others, proved that the good sisters were bestowing their merciful care on all who were brought to their doors, unmindful of nationality.

When the orgy was at its height, an officer with some soldiers hammered at the door and demanded that the Sisters leave in order that the Hospice might be destroyed as had the other buildings.

Sister Julie then appeared and begged the officer in memory of his mother, and for the sake of the wounded and the dying with which the building was filled, to spare the Hospice. She told him that she was caring for the wounded Germans as tenderly as she was for her own wounded countrymen.

The earnestness of her plea met with success, though the officer insisted upon being shown the patients in order that he could have proof for himself of the truth of her statement. We were told that in going through the wards he tore the bandages from the wounds, causing the blood to flow afresh, giving the excuse that he was searching for weapons.

Sister Julie finally succeeded in getting rid of the officer and his men and thus saved her patients from death and the Hospice from ruin. She sat in a chair at the front entrance throughout most of the night to guard her charges. When the buildings all about her were blazing fiercely, she made some of the Germans carry water and put out fires which had been started in adjoining buildings, and also leave a tub of water in the hall of the Hospice so that fires could be quenched if started by flying embers.



### THE MAGNIÈRES CATHEDRAL STILL STANDS

THE Magnières Cathedral still stands—torn and almost destroyed, its side walls penetrated with great gaping holes, it proudly rears its head with an added air of magnificence, while around it the little village lies a desolate waste.



## THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE, AND SISTER JULIE

The cross of the Legion of Honor was conferred upon this undaunted woman for her brave and heroic work. President Poincaré came from Paris to pin the cross, the highest of all decorations in France, upon her breast.

The only keen regret we registered during our trip just behind the front was in missing Sister Julie when we visited the Hospice. She was away on one of her errands of mercy in a neighboring village.







A TEMPORARY BRIDGE ACROSS THE MEUSE

MANY of the magnificent stone bridges of France, which are among the finest examples of artistic-utilitarian architecture to be found anywhere, have been reduced to dust by enemy fire. When the supply of pontoons became exhausted, the French military engineers promptly and ingeniously made use of materials closest to hand. Here, on the Meuse, ordinary truck and farm carts were used as foundations for a bridge that carried thousands of soldiers single file to the advance trenches.



## CHAPTER VI

### NANCY, THE HOME OF PREFECT MIRMAN

**I**N a drenching rain, and with the reverberating thunder of the big guns, we entered Lunéville and were at once filled with gloom and sadness at the scene of desolation about us. This garrison town with its important cavalry station before the war was one of the many places which the Germans destroyed by fire before retreating. It is situated at the confluence of the Meurthe and the Vezouge rivers, and before its ruin retained a flavor of the decayed splendor of the Dukes of Lorraine, who resided here in the early eighteenth century. Francis of Lorraine, son of Duke Léopold, who afterwards became Francis I., was born here.

The old château, built in 1706 by Duke Léopold, from plans by Boffrand, a pupil of Mansard, and afterwards embellished by Stanislas, has been partially destroyed by fire several times, but sufficient is left to enable one to realize the noble grandeur of the original building. It is now used as a cavalry barracks.

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

Among the later disasters which Lunéville suffered was the destruction of her public market by bombs from German airplanes. This happened ten days before our visit and caused the death of forty-one women who were either tending the stalls or making their purchases. When one looked upon the ruins of the market, one could easily have believed from the aged and mouldy surface which the rains had given the piles of rubbish that the demolition had occurred many years ago.

. . . . .

In the village of Vitrimont, which we next visited, we found one small peasant cottage standing. This wee house of but two rooms is now the home of Miss Daisy Polk, of California, who is acting for the California committee in the rebuilding of this village. Two little old peasant women with round, cheery faces set off by kerchiefs and lace caps, keep the place immaculate, care for the garden and do the cooking for Miss Polk.

The red-tiled floors, the rude but comfortable furniture and the flowering plants in the windows helped build an oasis of comfort in this desert of crumbled stone and plaster. Miss Polk had on her pay-roll about fifty men and women who were



#### REGARDS TO THE BOCHE

THE saucy, ever-chattering machine-gun, its operators helmeted and wearing gas-masks, seeks to silence a German weapon of the same kind in a trench a few hundred yards distant across the bleak and barren plain. In the middle ground are posts holding barbed wire entanglements, erected to check the Prussian mass attacks.



## NANCY, THE HOME OF PREFECT MIRMAN

too old to be of service in connection with the great struggle, and with these people she was constructing new roofs where the four walls of the houses were still standing, and rebuilding other houses from the old stone, beams and flooring found in the wreckage.

. . . . .

The rain followed us all the way to Nancy but could not dampen our enthusiasm for the famous Place Stanislas in which we arrived towards evening. This world-famous square, with its four exquisitely wrought iron gateways, its fountains and its splendid architectural setting, was built in the time of Louis XVI. from designs by the man whose name it bears. At my first view of it, and even in the unfavorable conditions of a cheerless, drizzling rain and approaching night, it seemed to me to fulfill its reputation.

While our rooms were being prepared in the Grand Hotel, I strolled about the town. Many people were hurrying along upon their business, little concerned, apparently, with the war which had brought occasional visits of the German shells and frequent raids by their airplanes. The tram-cars, run by sturdy women in uniform, clanged their way through the streets. The shops were

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

flourishing, if one could judge by the number of persons who filled them.

The industries of the town, I was told, were all running as usual. The lighting and power plant, the water supply, the *poste et télégraphe*, barber shops, hotels and stores were busy uninterruptedly. Among the present population of about seventy thousand, a little more than half of the population in 1914, there was little indication of worry or fear. The anxious days which these people have spent in the past two and a half years have confirmed them in their calm and composure.

When the alarm gives notice that hostile aircraft are approaching or a bursting shell warns of the beginning of a bombardment, they lose no time in getting off the streets or out of the shops, cafés or from their beds into the first cellar, the entrance to which is indicated by the double cross of Lorraine painted in red above the doorway. All large cellars which have vaulted stone roofs are thus marked and have entrances both from the street and from the interior of the building.

If a bombardment is in progress, the citizens wait patiently in the cellars, timing with their watches the interval between explosions. They immediately emerge and proceed about their



## NANCY, THE HOME OF PREFECT MIRMAN

business when twice the regular interval elapses, for they then know that the shelling has ceased for the present.

On a side street I found the remains of a school where one hundred and thirty children were at their studies when a German shell crashed on the roof of the building. The shell failed to explode and the schoolmistress hurried the children into the cellar before a second shell struck in the same place. It was well she acted quickly, for the upper part of the building was completely destroyed by the second shell. Whether by accident or design, the German newspaper accounts a few days later actually stated that their artillery had destroyed a "French supply depot" in the city of Nancy!

On returning to the hotel I found that there was not sufficient help to prepare dinner for our large party. We consequently dined at the Restaurant Stanislas, diagonally across the square.

After dinner, Madame Mirman and her two charming daughters graciously entertained us at the Prefecture. During the evening they recounted many interesting incidents of the war, and showed us a collection of shells of many sizes which had been gathered for them in and about

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

Nancy. These shells gave a good idea of the guns the Germans were using.

The young ladies described exciting days which they had spent since the war began and recalled their emotions on a day when three thousand shells shrieked through the air on their way to the French batteries behind the city. They told us that on many days shells passed overhead at intervals of every few minutes from nine in the morning till five in the evening. Then there were days when the shells did not go over, but stopped with a crash on homes, churches, hospitals, schools and in the streets. Even now it is not unusual for shells to drop into the city without warning while the Germans check the range of their big guns some fifteen miles away.

The charming spirit in the home life of these dear people who are devoting their best efforts of mind and body to the care and comfort of their suffering fellow men will always remain most pleasantly in my memory.

The joy in my first brief view of Nancy impelled me to rise early the next morning and to stir out immediately after *café au lait*.

Nestling among the wooded hills eleven hundred



### THE OLD TOWER

THE picturesque Old Tower on the River Thur, in Thann, affords a vision of tranquil delight. In this beautiful valley of the Moselle, Nature seemed to develop into her most sublime loveliness. This photograph is of a charming bit of the Old World when the world really was old. It is a new world now—we hope a new world of democracy triumphant.



## NANCY, THE HOME OF PREFECT MIRMAN

feet above the sea, this most charming little city captivates all who visit her.

The red roofs and stuccoed walls of her pretty homes were softened by the shadows of the beautiful elms, maples and horse-chestnuts. The blooms of late summer still filled the gardens, and over the arbors clambered masses of vines ablaze in their rich fall coloring. The excellent hotels, restaurants, schools, theatres and opera, as well as a splendid public library and museum, all help, surely, to make Nancy a delightful residential city.

Back of the town but still within range of the German guns live two thousand old men, women and children gathered from the razed towns and villages. They are State charges, housed, cared for and fed in some old barracks, and are under the supervision of Prefect Mirman.

In great long rooms which are comfortably equipped with beds, benches and stoves, these poor people are, as far as possible, divided and maintained in groups from their home villages. This care in grouping, we were told, has added much to their comfort. Old women with bent figures and wearing white lace caps sit about and discuss the harrowing events they have just lived through,

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

and dream of the time when the war shall be over and they may return to their villages and rebuild their homes and plant their gardens. White iron hospital beds are arranged along each wall, and above the heads are shelves on which one notes the few cherished remembrances of a once happy home—a crucifix, a little picture, a box, a mirror or a brass candlestick—so little to have saved and yet so precious to the poor owner.

Some of the rooms are used as wards for the orphans and for those children whose parents are at the front or in the munition works. Above the little beds are small piles of extra linen frocks, and in between the piles is sometimes tucked away a doll or other plaything, the only link the child has between the happy past and dreadful present.

When the barracks were first opened for the refugees, the Prefect told the doctors that the people were coming from towns and villages where sanitary conditions were unknown and that, without great care, sickness would prevail when large numbers of them were confined in the none too ample quarters. The doctors were promised that funds would be forthcoming to provide all help necessary, but that they would be held responsible for the general welfare of the refugees. If an



#### A COMMEMORATIVE RELIGIOUS PROCESSION

A RELIGIOUS procession, commemorative of the French re-occupation, wending its way through the ruins of the once lovely and cloistered village of Gerbevillier. Scarcely a home stood whole and uninjured after the German evacuation—only shapeless masses, hummocks of brick, stone, iron and splintered wood. Yet, on the site of these sorry ruins, a new Gerbevillier is arising—a Gerbevillier of model homes that will serve for examples in rebuilding other French towns and will mark the advance of new France.





## NANCY, THE HOME OF PREFECT MIRMAN

epidemic broke out the doctors would be tried by court martial and if found guilty of neglect would be sentenced to death and shot.

In a large wooden building with a capacity of between two or three thousand people, built at the rear of the barracks, for use as a chapel, old men, women and children were attending service. The interior, its woodwork stained a warm brown, was lighted by many candles. As we entered, the singing of the boy choir and the fervent attitude of the poor homeless worshippers praying to "God, from whom all blessings flow," showed vividly the abiding faith of the French people, their prayers and music mingling with the intermittent mutter of the enemy's guns which continued to blast and destroy but a few miles away.

There is a large work-room connected with the barracks and in it the women are ever busy sewing bags for the trenches and sheets for the hospitals. In this building is also the kitchen whence the food comes, clean, well cooked and palatable. One franc per day, per person, covers the cost.

I was pleased to learn that the Prefect, in addition to all the other excellent arrangements for the care of these poor people, had even found time to plan for their recreation. He had built

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

a little theatre in which many plays and moving-picture shows are given. The Prefect told us he had found amusement indispensable even in these trying times and that, in addition to the good such recreation was doing the refugees, he had been able to save a number of his superintendents who otherwise would have been worn out by the strain. No gratuitous help is used in any of this work. It is found more satisfactory to pay good wages to the men and women who are helping to carry on this worthy service.

During a delightful luncheon at the Restaurant Stanislas, Prefect Mirman spoke with great feeling and appreciation of the work which Miss Polk of the California committee was doing in reconstruction. He also referred eloquently to the brilliant services rendered by the strong and daring young Americans in the ambulance and flying corps and to the affection which the American people, through their great sympathy for France in her distress had created in the hearts of his countrymen.

The Prefect's charming and magnetic personality, linked with his executive ability, makes him particularly well suited for the great work he is doing.



### "EMPTY HUSKS"

A GREAT heap of metal envelopes which contained France's reply to the Hun. These empty shell-cases were collected in the rear of a battery of French guns. The appetite of the cannon is insatiable.



## NANCY, THE HOME OF PREFECT MIRMAN

His hearty hand-shake and sunny smile help to smooth out the lines of distress from many a furrowed brow. His kind words never fail to comfort the poor people who are bearing bravely and without complaint the taking of fathers, sons or brothers, as well as the loss of their homes and the savings of a lifetime.

The sector in which Nancy lies was free from active fighting while we were in it, but as we started west towards Bar-le-Duc we were told that we might at any moment look for plenty of action and that perhaps we would find more than enough.

By noon we had reached one of the oldest towns in France—Toul, on the left bank of the Moselle. Together with Verdun and Metz, Toul forms a triangle of great fortifications. The French have tried assiduously to regain Metz so as to control again the three famous forts.

After wending our way through the twisted streets of this quaint town, famous since its earliest days for its wine and brandy, we crossed the Moselle and were again stopped by a sentry who carefully viséd our papers before allowing us to proceed.

The villages through which we passed after leaving Toul had escaped the German shells, and the atmosphere seemed normal enough save for the troops quartered in them.

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

Groups of children were playing in the streets; their rosy cheeks, happy shouts and laughter proving that they had not suffered like the children of some villages through which we had passed. I was surprised to learn that in this section of France families of six or even eight fine, healthy children were not uncommon. If such a condition had prevailed years ago in all sections of France there could have been no talk of race suicide and the country would have been much better prepared with men for this present war.

As we approached Pagny, the meadows were flooded from the almost incessant rains of the past week. Wagons and farming machinery of all kinds stood nearly submerged in the meadows, looking like submarine contraptions which had come to the surface in search of an enemy. Lined along the sides of the main road at the outskirts of the town were innumerable wagons of all descriptions. These had been impressed as lorries for carrying provisions to the front.

On leaving the town our car was stopped at the command of the sentry for the usual examination of papers, and the booming of the great guns at St. Mihiel could be distinctly heard.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHÂLONS AND ITS WAR CEMETERY

THE rain which had been holding off all morning now fell in torrents. The roadside ditches were rushing streams and the sodden fields were beginning to submerge. The little town of Vigny looked woe-begone and deserted save for the few soldiers who, mounted or on foot, were hurrying here and there about their important business. Beyond the town we came upon a very long supply train of one hundred wagons whose canvas hoods reminded me of our old prairie-schooners. Each was packed to its full capacity with provisions. The great number of these supply trains, post trains and ammunition trains, which we were constantly passing, visualized in part the machinery and the vast quantity of material required to support the fighting forces in the trenches.

In the gathering gloom of a forlorn night, we entered the deserted streets of Bar-le-Duc, the ancient capital of the Dukes of Bar, situated on the Ornain, and one of the chief towns of the Department of the Meuse. In normal times the popula-

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

tion is about 18,000, but we learned that most of the inhabitants had departed for the south of France.

It was not the thought of the fine preserves and excellent wines for which Bar-le-Duc is noted that made me wish to linger for a day in the town. I had in mind the Church of San Antoine built in the fourteenth century, with its beautiful stained glass and its window tracery.

A study of the church or a view of the portrait of Tintoretto, by himself, in the Musée, would have been a sufficient inducement. However, our military papers prescribed our route and scheduled our stops, and as we were due to spend the night of October 8th in Châlons, to Châlons we went forthwith.

Our chauffeurs, who were exceptionally skilful men, had been driving for officers since the beginning of the war, and it was therefore not surprising that they drove at what seemed to us a reckless speed. Although we were obliged to travel a great deal after dark, without lights, our drivers showed no apparent inclination to lessen the speed established in the daytime. They seemed determined to get the most out of the machines and I am sure they were successful. My only consolation lay in





### RÉVIGNY—A PICTURE OF DEVASTATION

ANOTHER of the almost numberless victims of Hunnish shells, Révigny is a mass of rubbish, great piles of brick and stone and plaster and twisted iron. This quiet little town in the valley of the Marne presents a picture of practically complete devastation, the few houses that still stand only accentuating the misery of destruction. In most cases the homes that were are represented by pathetic reminders in the form of stark, rugged outlines of a chimney or a portion of a plastered wall.



## CHÂLONS AND ITS WAR CEMETERY

the thought that at the rate we traveled we made poor targets for the German guns which often were trained on the roads we had to traverse. The term "nerve-racked" fairly describes my condition after traveling four hours in the darkness.

The ruins of Révigny, a town of two thousand inhabitants before the war, were in complete darkness when we arrived. By the use of our headlights, which were turned on for a few minutes, we were able to see rising here and there from out the wet mass of rubbish the stark, ragged outlines of a chimney or portion of plastered wall—pathetic reminders of a once peaceful home.

I was much depressed by the sight of the utter destruction about us as we slowly crept between the great piles of brick, stone, plaster and twisted iron.

Through the main street were lined wagons of a long supply and post train; the poor tired horses standing with drooping heads and ears, soaking wet and steaming in the rain, no doubt grateful, as were their drivers, for their short respite from exhausting work.

It was not always easy for our chauffeurs to find their way in the dark, and when we lost sight of the car ahead it was with considerable uneasiness

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

that we pushed on at top speed. While on the main highways we had little trouble in keeping the road, but when passing through the demolished villages and towns many opportunities for losing our route presented themselves.

Twice during the night after leaving Bar-le-Duc we lost our way, but by sheer good fortune arrived at the "Hotel de la Haute Mère de Dieu" in Châlons at ten o'clock with no damage other than a severe strain to our nervous systems. The meal had been prepared and waiting for us since seven o'clock and we did not hesitate to show our interest in the repast that was set before us.

As the hotel with its reduced help could not take care of our entire party, some were billeted to quarters a few blocks away, and not long after dinner those who were to "sleep out" started across the square to find their beds. Without help we might have spent the night searching, for no gleam of light was allowed through chink of window or crack of door and the night was black. Besides, the turns and angles of the narrow streets of Châlons were most puzzling.

I found I was not to occupy a room in the Hotel d'Angleterre, to which I had been directed by the motherly old proprietress, but had been billeted to



### MAKING READY FOR ACTION

**M**AKING ready for action one of the great French guns, the Rimailho, so named after its inventor, the French general. It is no easy task to move these tremendous cannon over the soft earth. The caterpillar treads are given the surety of hold and support afforded by planks laid along the path as a temporary track.



## CHÂLONS AND ITS WAR CEMETERY

a room in an old house on the opposite corner, owned by Madame Jacquard, who loaned two of her best rooms to the hotel on occasion.

After entering the small stone-flagged hall, I stepped down into my room, which occupied the corner of the house and, lighting a candle, looked about me. The warm coziness of the room removed it at once from the class of "hotel rooms." The floor was covered with a velvet carpet in good soft-green tones. The walls of warm gray were hung with interesting and well-framed prints, and the Louis XVI. furniture with its excellent tapestry covering breathed of more fortunate times and more luxurious surroundings.

The bed strongly appealed to my appreciation of comfort and, well pleased with my lot, I slipped under the covers and was soon among scenes untouched by the carnage of war. On awaking early the next morning I found it difficult to place myself. The sounds of voices and of hurried footsteps were so very close to me that for the moment they seemed in the room.

The casement windows were open, but the iron shutters closed. I sprang from bed and was pushing them open with effort when there was a bump, a shout and a scrambling, together with loud

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

laughter from across the street; and lo! before my eyes was the ludicrous figure of a fat postman whom the swinging shutters had struck in the stomach and cleared completely off the absurdly narrow sidewalk. The man's surprise proved hard to express promptly in words and before he could speak I apologized to his evident satisfaction, and again amused the group of schoolboys by my speech in pajamas from the open window.

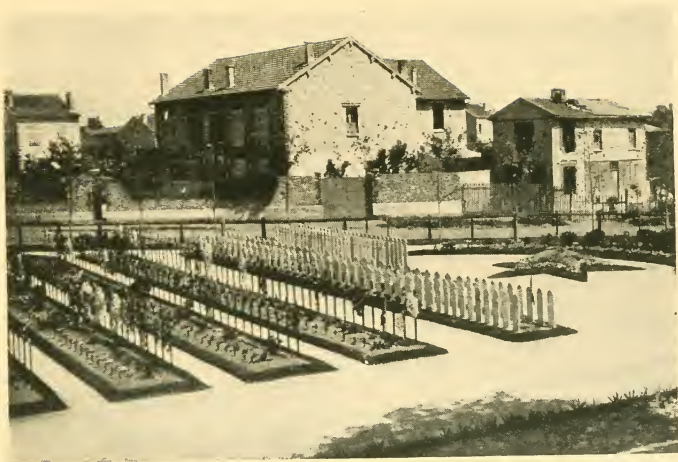
The morning, crisp and bright, promised a fair day. After dressing I breakfasted in the garden, surrounded by beds of asters and chrysanthemums.

"Would you like to accompany me to the War Cemetery?" smilingly inquired my pretty hostess, as she appeared in the kitchen doorway. Of course I would, and finishing my coffee I took a last look about the sweet little garden and joined her.

I was pleased to carry the basket containing beautiful flowering chrysanthemums which were to be planted on the graves of two boys whose parents lived far away in the south, and who had written requesting her to perform the service for them.

Near the outskirts of the city, the cemetery, a few acres of unoccupied land in the beginning of





### "IN THE DEMOCRACY OF THE DEAD"

"IN THE democracy of the dead, all men, at last, are equal. There is neither rank, station, nor prerogative in the republic of the grave," said Robert G. Ingersoll. In many of these cemeteries—beautifully kept gardens they appear, with their neat, well-kept walks, bordered with cheerful flowers—the soldiers of France share their final earthly resting-place with the Prussian and Mohammedan warriors, victims of the world holocaust, yet victors after all, because they have at last found peace.



## CHÂLONS AND ITS WAR CEMETERY

the war, was now the last home of thousands of brave young fellows who at the first bugle-call had gone smiling to their duty, believing that Christmas would find them home again, happy and well, among their families and friends.

The broad, well-kept walks bordered with flowering plants, the orderly arrangement and the dignity of the place brought to my lips words of praise for the good people who, through all the distressing times since the retreat of the Germans in the fall of 1914, had made and cared for this beautiful garden where the bodies of many of the best sons of France have been reverently laid to rest.

After the battle of Châlons, trenches were dug six feet deep, eight feet wide and seventy-five feet long, and as the dead were brought from the front and from the hospitals they were tenderly laid side by side and covered with earth, leaving the remaining portion of the long graves to accommodate the bodies which would arrive on the days to come. Rows upon rows of black wooden crosses three feet in height mark with eternal sadness the last resting-place of the soldiers.

On the crosses are stenciled in white numerals the numbers which were taken from the aluminum wrist-bands and over the cross-arms are hung

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

beautiful imperishable wreaths wrought in colored beads; some of the crosses have several wreaths, but many, many of them are without the slightest indication that those at home know of the resting-place of their loved ones.

There were also many German soldiers interred here, and toward the farther end the Star and Crescent neatly worked out in a large bed of flowers indicated the section in which a number of Spahis had been buried. These poor fellows are buried in a standing position, facing the east, and the individual graves therefore occupy a space on the surface of only twenty-four inches square.

They are thus interred that Mahomet may, according to their belief, easily lift the candidates into heaven by the ears!

While we were in the cemetery a poor woman came and, grasping the pickets of the neat white fence, sobbed as though her heart would break. She was the picture of abject misery. Each morning she comes to plead with the gardeners to tell her the whereabouts of her dear man from whom she has heard nothing since he went bravely from Châlons to fight the savage Huns more than two years ago. You may be sure that she has searched every dead face that has come to the garden, but



### A WAR-TIME CEMETERY

THE heroic sons of France lie buried here in this well-ordered cemetery behind the lines. The last resting-place of the brave poilu who has laid aside his gun forever is marked with the numerals stamped on the aluminum wrist-band which had been attached to his wrist. To these cemeteries come tired-eyed women, some with flowers and wreaths to brighten the graves of their lost loved ones, others to search for their heroes of whose fate they know not.



## CHÂLONS AND ITS WAR CEMETERY

she stood that day, as she has stood each day for many months, slowly being consumed by grief.

The sweet peacefulness of this flower-scented garden was suddenly shattered by the crash of bursting shells and the roar of guns as the artillery began its daily activity but a few miles away. The reverberations soon merged into the continuous roll of heavy thunder and my blood quickened as my thoughts were rudely brought back from their dreaming to the present-day happenings of a sad, mad world.

While on my way through the winding streets of old Châlons in search of the thirteenth-century cathedral, I recalled the history of some of the trials and sieges which this chief town of the Department of the Marne has suffered since its early days.

Great battles were fought here in the third century, and it was in the middle of the fifth century that the Huns were defeated by the Romans, Franks and Visigoths in so important a conflict that it is set down as one of the fifteen decisive battles of the world.

Without doubt this town had a good and early training. Centuries passed, but her troubles were ever present. The Prussians occupied the city in

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

1814, the Russians in 1815, and the Germans in 1870, and again in 1914. Is it any wonder that the atmosphere of this venerable city creates in one the deepest reverence?

It is most fortunate that the Germans in their retreat in September, 1914, did not shell the Cathedral or the Church of Notre Dame, which is situated just behind the Hotel de Ville; for the destruction of these architectural monuments would have proved an irreparable loss to the world equal to those of Louvain and Ypres. The Church of Notre Dame is supposed to have been begun in the twelfth century and its structure is most interesting on account of the combination of Romanesque and Gothic styles. Here again the superb glass! The gems and jewels of the vitreous art of the Middle Ages, through which the sunlight streaming fell in soft iridescences of rose, amber, emerald and purple upon nave and transept and choir.

The people in the streets hurried briskly in the cool, crisp autumn air, each busied with his own concerns and unconscious of the heavy intermittent reverberations which noisily announced the proximity of the great world war and its accompanying death and destruction.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE ROAD TO RHEIMS

**I**N THE middle of the forenoon we reluctantly entered our motor cars, left the interesting old town, and were soon on the highway leading to that most noted historical city, Rheims. The country was glorious—great fields of prime alfalfa lay on either side. Then came long stretches of country symmetrically laid out with thrifty young pine and spruce, samples of France's comprehensive plan of reforestation.

The highway, bordered with fine Norway maples, lay as a taut gray ribbon straight before us. Like a "Midway" in a great world's fair, this enchanting road held much of interest. I turned hurriedly from right to left, fearing lest I might miss something on either side—like a child at a two-ringed circus.

Sergeant Forot, turning toward me, pointed to a half-dozen objects showing high against the sky on the right of the road. Then I saw for the first time the sausage balloons, those great bologna-shaped gas-bags which, tethered behind the lines,

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

are invaluable to the army as observation posts. From his high position in one of these posts, the observer detects through his binoculars the movements of the enemy troops, the approach of reinforcements, or the preparation for an attack, and at once telephones his information to headquarters.

As we approached Les Grandes Loges, we overtook a company of mitrailleurs returning from the front trenches to billets in rest camp. The men were rough-looking and dirty, covered with mud and grime, but they seemed well and hearty, with plenty of snap and vigor left in them. Their eyes shone with a singularly keen earnestness and fervor—expressions of the wonderful spirit of determination and constancy which have helped make the French soldier the object of our wonder and admiration.

Between the evenly spaced shade trees on the right-hand side was a protective screen sometimes made of pine boughs and at others of jute material, in both cases hung from wire stretched about sixteen feet above the ground.

"We are now within the range of the German shells," called back our sergeant; "the screen is absolutely necessary." It certainly added much to my comfort.



#### AFTER THE ENEMY HAD PASSED

ON the shell-torn bank of the Somme, where some of the fiercest fighting of the war occurred. Not only did German shells work their havoc, but the French and English guns, too, wrought destruction. These ruins do not picture the state of one town, but of hundreds of French towns and villages. Official photographers and correspondents are here shown recording the desolation after the passing of the enemy.



## ON THE ROAD TO RHEIMS

Airplanes used for reconnoitering are parked at intervals back of the front. We passed from time to time one of these parks where everything was in readiness. On the instant of a telephone order six eager "hawks" would rise in search of their prey, and from the records seldom failed to find and destroy it. Hangars built of wooden frames and stretched with canvas are so well painted in camouflage that it is impossible for the enemy airmen to discover them.

The larger machines are equipped with wireless with which to advise their headquarters as to the position and movement of the enemy. Smoke-balls as well as a system of spirals and dips are used to direct the fire of the artillery.

A large airplane sailing along above us was under orders to convoy us over the dangerous portion of our road and to signal for help if trouble came to us.

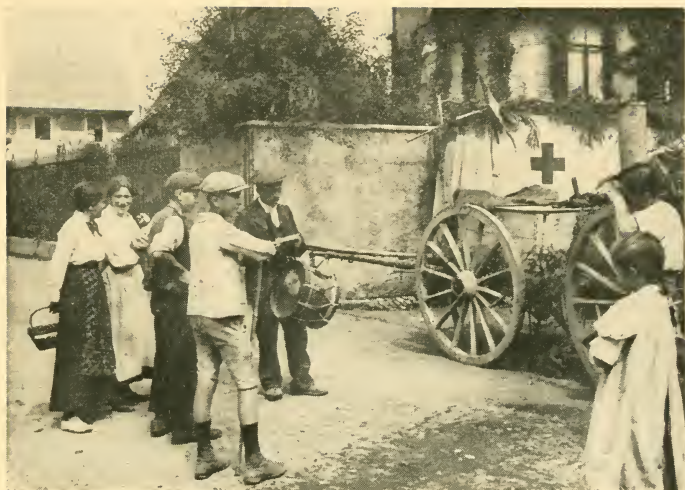
The presence of barbed wire entanglements, screens and trenches along the way suggested the nearness of the enemy and also that it might have been well to slow up a bit and go more cautiously. But no, our chauffeurs, who have been over this road many times in the past

two years, deemed it more expedient, to my regret, to increase the speed.

"You should have been here an hour ago," said the sentry as we entered the village of Beaumont. "The bursting of a '180' is something to see." I expressed my regret at not having arrived in time, but did not stop to investigate the damage as I believed in the old adage that "troubles never come singly," and felt that I would rather learn of the arrival of the second shell while I was going away from there.

Our nearness to the German lines soon became of serious moment. We were warned by the sentries on leaving Beaumont that it would be very unsafe for us to continue on the main road to Rheims. We therefore made a detour south through Verzy, over a cross-country road. This dirt road led us through some of the important vineyards in the Champagne district. Wire entanglements ran in all directions through the vines and supported many hidden trenches.

Screens of brush and jute stuff hung across and above the road as we climbed the hill to the sad little village of Verzy. Fifty feet apart, and acting as "flies" in a stage setting, these screens effectively hid the road from view of the Germans across



### A TOWN CRIER

THE village drummer, a loyal Frenchman, proud of his post, now that his true countrymen have brought part of the lost provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, "back home," is the local equivalent of the town crier of our own Colonial days. Here he is reading to the assembled and delighted townsfolk a bit of good news from the advancing French front.





the valley. Like Beaumont, Verzy had not only suffered from shell-fire but also from street and house fighting, as the bullet-holes through doors and windows, splintered jambs and shutters and the honeycombed stucco amply testified. All barns and sheds along the roads were marked with big numerals indicating the number of men and horses which they could accommodate.

In leaving Verzy we passed a battery of field-guns cleverly hidden in a field on the left of the road. Unless with the help of another's eyes, I would have passed, without a suspicion of its existence, the emplacement, surrounded as it was with transplanted trees, shrubs and vines.

The absence for some time of the last two cars gave us considerable uneasiness, and on reaching the summit of a hill we determined to wait for them.

Many of the battlefields of the earlier period of the war lay in the valley below us.

About eight miles across the plain, and showing like a dark brown spot against the gray horizon, stood one of the noblest and finest examples of early Gothic architecture.

My heart throbbed fast as I first caught sight of the world-famous cathedral, and the thought of

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

the dastardly attempt of the Huns to burn and destroy this coronation place of all but four of the kings of France made me hot with indignation. At this distance the venerable architectural pile looked as it had looked for many centuries and I kept turning in my mind the questions: "How badly is it damaged?" and "Can it be repaired?" In less than an hour I shall answer the questions for myself.

Soon on the road behind us appeared two tiny specks which proved through our glasses to be the delayed cars, and we immediately started on towards Rheims.

Again on the main highway, we found it now continuously screened.

Our chauffeurs had orders to keep the automobiles three hundred metres apart in order to avoid tempting the German gunners with a group of six. As we stopped at the command of one of the numerous sentries, we found ourselves in the midst of a company of soldiers who were vigorously digging new trenches for the support of the road.

## CHAPTER IX

### RHEIMS AND ITS DESECRATED CATHEDRAL

**A**T LAST we are in Rheims, whose importance in France to-day, great though it is, is perhaps no greater in proportion than it was back in the time of the Romans.

We enjoyed an excellent luncheon at the City Club, tendered us by Robert Leuthwaite, president, and a few of the members. The thought of a big one-hundred-and-eighty-millimetre German shell bursting close at hand did not abate our keen appetites. One shell would have sufficed to spoil the entertainment, and we learned that as many as three thousand had fallen upon the city in one day.

While seated at table, Mr. Leuthwaite described the unannounced entrance a few days before of a large German shell. It came through the transom of a window directly back of where he was sitting and crashed through the dining-room floor into the cellar. Fortunately it arrived between meals and failed to explode when it reached the cellar.

The conversation at table drifted from war to what France planned to do after the war; then to

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

wines and the great vintages, and then back to war again. In describing some of the famous vintages of years gone by and the old-time methods of curing and bottling, Colonel Tantôt on my right told us that on festal occasions, many years ago, there was in use the "Jeroboam," a large bottle holding four quarts or twice the quantity of the "magnum," and that on very grand occasions it was not uncommon to open a few "Nebuchadnezzars." These latter bottles contained eight quarts of champagne.

"The crops for 1914 and 1915 were good ones and the wines of those years will probably reach you as vintage wines," was Mr. Leuthwaite's answer to a question I put to him.

The 1916 crop is a failure, it having been impossible to spray and care for the vines.

The Colonel, who had won the red ribbon and had just returned from active service, described to those seated near him some of the battles in which he had fought. In one battle, in September, 1915, he lost all his officers and practically all of his men. Everybody about him had been shot down, yet he escaped without a scratch.

Discussing the dogged perseverance of the French peasant, he related the following incident:



### A CATHEDRAL THAT ESCAPED DESTRUCTION

ONE of the most potent reasons why Germany holds on so tenaciously to Alsace is because of the productiveness of iron ore in the Meurthe and Moselle country. Here the cathedral, though sadly damaged, miraculously escaped utter demolition when a mighty shell, hurtling on its errand of destruction, crashed into a wall of stone and mortar, and lost the force of its power through the impact. Square after square of houses lies in ruins.



## RHEIMS AND ITS DESECRATED CATHEDRAL

“One morning,” said he, “as I was shaving, I was surprised to see through the window of the house I was occupying as headquarters a peasant plowing in the field near-by. The shells were constantly screaming overhead, and as the man was liable to be killed, I sent an orderly to warn him of his danger and to suggest that he leave his work until after the shelling in that sector had ceased. On the following morning, while again shaving, I saw the man back at his work beginning to plow where he had left off the day before. I this time ordered him to desist until the fighting was over, but it was only by arresting him and placing him under guard that, on the third morning, I was able to make him leave his work. The peasant was much annoyed, explaining that it was necessary for him to plow his field; that if he waited until the fighting was finished, it would be too late to plant his seed and his crop therefore would be a failure the following year.”

The Colonel did not attempt to conceal his uneasiness concerning our visit to Rheims, and explained that the Germans were in the habit of shelling the city every few days with their big guns, which were constantly kept trained upon the town. “If they have not observed your cars entering the

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

city, then you have the low-hanging clouds to thank," he remarked as we left the dining-room.

Of the four hundred members of the City Club only six were left in Rheims. We were not allowed to linger over our coffee and cigars, for there was much of interest to be seen in the city and afterwards we were to visit the trenches. When we left, the three chefs came from the kitchen and expressed their pleasure at our visit and wished us Godspeed.

In going about this old city, I was greatly shocked by the ruthless and wanton destruction which it had suffered at the hands of the Germans. One out of every four houses had been injured and one out of every ten houses was entirely destroyed.

Many of the former beautiful residences were but masses of twisted iron, plaster, brick and broken tile.

A deep shell-hole made by a three-hundred-and-fifty-millimetre shell in the pavement at the intersection of several streets had completely destroyed most of the houses in the neighborhood. Some were unroofed, while the side walls of others filled the streets.

The city was occupied by the Germans on September 5, 1914, and after holding it for seven days





### RHEIMS IN RUINS

THE ruins of Rheims, the result of Kultur in action. German shells, directed at the noble cathedral in the background, wrecked vast areas of this, one of the quaintest and loveliest of the larger cities of France. Although for weeks the gunners of the enemy strove to utterly demolish the cathedral, the main part of the magnificent structure still stands, and casts the shadow of its great glory on the surrounding waste.



## RHEIMS AND ITS DESECRATED CATHEDRAL

they evacuated on the 12th. It was on the 19th of September that they shelled and fired the cathedral.

Of the one hundred and eighteen thousand inhabitants before the war, many had been killed and wounded, many had taken up their residences in southern cities, and at the time of our visit there were but twelve thousand left, most of whom still lived in the cellars of their homes.

As we passed the venerable Church of St. Remi, which was built in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we learned that the clock in the tower stopped on Sunday afternoon at five thirty-five, when the bombardment of the city began, although neither the clock nor the tower were touched by shell. This church contained many beautiful twelfth-century glass windows and some historical tapestries. The church had once been attached to an important abbey, which for years had been used as a hospital. This hospital was shelled by the Germans with incendiary bombs and destroyed by fire. The patients who were too ill to escape through their own efforts were safely removed before the roof fell. The building was a very old one. In the first-story lobby I saw the names of some of the early benefactors, opposite

which were engraved the dates "1487" and "1492."

Upon their entrance into the city the Germans printed and posted notices to the effect that they had arrested and locked up in the Prefecture one hundred prominent citizens of Rheims (among them our host, Robert Leuthwaite), and in case any citizen fired on the troops these hostages would be marched to the square and shot. "I can scarcely call that week in September, 1914, the happiest in my life," dryly remarked Mr. Leuthwaite. "I expected at any moment that some indignant citizen would take a shot from his window at a strolling officer and thus abruptly end my plans for the future."

With painful forebodings I approached the great cathedral. I dreaded to see what I had already learned—that it was damaged beyond repair. From a little distance the exterior damage did not seem serious, but on close inspection the real results of the abominable crime were laid bare. The upper roof had been completely burned off but the vaulted stone roof, though pierced here and there by gaping shell-holes, remained intact and apparently in good condition.

The five hundred and thirty large statues which adorned the three exquisite recessed portals of

## RHEIMS AND ITS DESECRATED CATHEDRAL

the west façade, perhaps the most beautiful structure produced in the Middle Ages, have either fallen to their destruction or have been burned so badly that all traces of features and drapery have been effaced.

The splendid statues in the niches crowning the wonderful flying buttresses have been destroyed and many of the buttresses ruined by the parapet walls falling upon them. The explosion of the incendiary shells and the consequent interior fire utterly smashed and melted all of the matchless thirteenth-century windows.

While the Germans occupied the city, the cathedral was used as a hospital. The chairs and other furniture were piled high against the walls and the floor was covered deep with straw. When the shells exploded in the interior, the straw blazed and the thousands of chairs and the priceless carved woodwork of the choir burned fiercely.

In the fiery furnace was consumed all but the memory of some of the most noted examples of stained glass, wood and stone carving that the world contained.

The west façade, built in the fourteenth century, was the finest part of the building. It had been undergoing repairs for a number of years and the

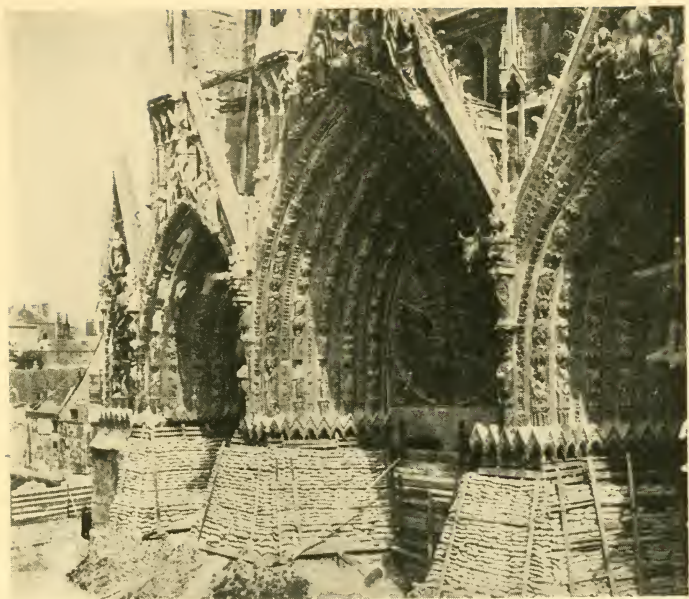
heavy wooden scaffolding around the north tower made a consuming fire which destroyed the carved moulding, niches and turrets, together with the many statues which they held.

The south tower, containing the two famous great bells—the one called “Charlotte” weighing eleven tons—was damaged far less than its sister tower.

The fine tapestries and paintings, among the latter the famous ones by Tintoretto and Nicolas Poussin, had, thanks to Heaven, been removed to a safe place before the invasion.

A feeling of deep depression possessed me as I walked down the nave of this once noble church, now desecrated by men who claim the pinnacle of culture. In its melancholy ruin it seemed like the corpse of a great evangel whose soul had departed. Numerous pigeons were wheeling in and out through the glassless windows and circling about in the remote shadows of the arched stone ceiling one hundred and twenty feet above the eye.

A pure-white feather, like a great snowflake swirling in the cold, shifting currents of air, settled softly at my feet. “Would to God,” I thought, “it had dropped from the dove of peace on its way to the peoples of a war-mad world.”



### THE MAIMED CATHEDRAL OF RHEIMS

AN example of architectural exquisiteness which fell before the guns of Kultur. Torn by German shells, scarred and bleeding, the Cathedral of Rheims, magnificent heritage of Middle Ages artistry, has taken on a new and more solemn grandeur. But the splendid statues are destroyed or burned beyond recognition, the matchless Thirteenth Century windows have been melted in the fiery furnace of Hunnish incendiarism, and the priceless carved woodwork is a mass of charred ruins.





## RHEIMS AND ITS DESECRATED CATHEDRAL

The bronze figure of Joan of Arc sitting astride her horse in the square in the front of the cathedral has miraculously escaped the shells of each bombardment. The people believe that the preservation of the statue is an omen of great good and that the spirit of the inspired woman who led the French armies to victory in the Fifteenth Century shall save France from her enemies in the present war.

The Archbishop's Palace, built at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century and occupied since that time for short periods by the kings of France before their coronations, has been completely destroyed. It was possible to discern only by a portion of wall left standing where the royal banqueting room, the hall and the library had been.

In spite of the many storms of bursting shells the old hotel on the square opposite the cathedral remained intact and was carrying on "business as usual." However, its exterior plastered walls were gashed and plowed by shell fragments and the roof tiles smashed in many places.

Many of the fine old houses which had made Rheims a mecca for the antiquarian have been destroyed. However, the celebrated House of the Musicians, built in the Thirteenth Century, was

easily identified in the Rue Tambour by the figures of seated musicians carved in relief on its front. It fortunately was not injured.

Rheims was selected in 1874 as one of the chief defences of the northern approaches to Paris and a chain of detached forts was begun in the vicinity. The forts, nine in number, formed a circle about six miles from the city, occupying a perimeter of twenty-two miles. It is therefore easy to see the reason for the continued activities in this sector since the beginning of the war.

The old city has been a centre for the wool industry from the earliest times and was considered the chief wool market of France. Combing, carding, spinning and weaving of flannels and woolen goods have been its chief industries, although the manufactures of champagne and machinery, chemicals, soaps and paper were very important.

The caves of the Piper Heidsieck Company, one of the largest manufacturers of champagne in Rheims, established as long ago as 1735, were in no way harmed by the bombardment, though six of the workmen lost their lives in the courtyard by the explosion of a single shell a few days previous to our visit.

The caves or galleries which have been hollowed



### A BATTLE-SCARRED CHURCH IN ALSACE

THE battle-scarred ruins of the interior of one of the churches in Thann, Alsace. The Prussian guns have long since proved to be no respecters of persons, things or religious creeds.



## RHEIMS AND ITS DESECRATED CATHEDRAL

out of the chalk formation are three stories in depth, the lowest one forty feet below the street level, and in these galleries which wind about underground for a distance of eight miles are stacked thousands of casks and hundreds of thousands of bottles. The side walls glitter and glisten from the damp floor to the arched white roof as the bottles catch the light of our torches.

Who could blame the poor citizens for taking refuge in these wonderful cellars when the first shells began to fall upon the city? Thirty-five hundred old men, women and children rushed down the rough-hewn steps at the beginning of the bombardment and stayed for days in the dark or in the meagre light of a few candles, waiting for the storm of shells to cease. As time went by and it was found impossible to properly feed and care for these people, the company appealed to their patriotism and urged them to leave.

"You cannot remain here; you will starve if you do," they were told by the managing director of the company. "Your sons, your brothers and your fathers are fighting for their country in the trenches and you are sorely needed to help in a thousand ways. Go back to your homes and help win the war for France."

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

But it was all to no purpose; fear supplanted reason, and only when the general in charge of the troops in the city sent soldiers to expel them did these poor people come up into the light of day, regain their courage, and assume the duties which, ever since, they have so loyally performed.

It is not difficult to understand the stories of the orgies which occurred while the Germans were in possession of the city of Rheims, particularly when one realizes that the full wine crop for the entire district is computed at 300,000 barrels; that the cellars described above and many others of smaller size were full of wine and that countless bottles of the best vintages were to be had for the taking.



### DEMOCRACY OF THE TRENCHES

**N**OT the least interesting feature of this photograph shows the democracy of the trenches. French colonials from Africa are here fighting for France, the mother country, side by side with the poilu. And what a use for the garden wall, famed in song and fable!







## CHAPTER X

### IN THE TRENCHES

A FINE, drizzling rain was falling as we left the cellars and started for the outskirts of the town to visit the trenches. "There is scarcely a citizen in Rheims to-day who would undertake to go to the cross-roads for which we are heading," remarked a member of the club who sat with me in the car. Although the city was very quiet and there was nothing to indicate immediate trouble, he evidently knew from past experience that the present peaceful conditions could change in a moment.

The high road-screen hid us completely from the view of the Germans, but the danger of our position was quite evident from the long grass growing between the cobblestones, an indication that the road had been unsafe for travel for some time. Keener eyes than mine would have passed unnoticed the cleverly concealed emplacement containing a mighty howitzer and a battery of four "75's." "We are very proud of our French soixante-quinze-millimetre field-gun," smilingly ex-

claimed my companion as he pointed out the battery to me. "Twenty-five shots a minute can be fired by a single gun and they have thus far done the most effective work in the war.

"A battery of four of these guns can fire one hundred three-inch shells a minute a distance of three miles. If properly placed, controlled and checked, they can, you understand, do considerable damage in a bombardment lasting five hours." Six officers and eighty men and the use of nearly two hundred horses are required to care for and support such a battery.

Each of these eighteen-pound, three-inch shells contains four hundred and twenty-five shrapnel bullets, and is it not a wonder that in a five-hour bombardment in which thirty thousand shells are exploded, sending twelve million seven hundred and fifty thousand death-dealing bullets in all directions, any soldier in the neighborhood of the bursting shells lives to describe the battle?

The batteries are generally placed from two to three miles back of the infantry, and are so carefully hidden that it is almost impossible for the enemy airmen to discover them. When it was necessary to place a battery in an open field, the effect of a natural corner of a farm was created by the



#### THE EYES OF THE FRENCH 75's

**C**ONCEALED in the luxurious foliage of ancient trees, these military observers scan the lay of the land, watching the movements of the enemy, and so direct the fire of the masked batteries. Thousands of venerable trees, such as this one, were ruthlessly destroyed by the Germans on their various retreating movements.



## IN THE TRENCHES

aid of temporary fences, trees, shrubs and vines, and the guns perfectly concealed. As there is no smoke to betray the location, the flash from the muzzles is the principal evidence to hide. This is done by firing through screens which, without checking the shell, conceal the flames. The batteries fire over their own infantry and, by communications given by telephone from observation posts in the front, are able to drop their shells into the trenches and upon the batteries of the enemy beyond.

Some little two-and-one-half-story brick cottages which we are passing have been battered to pieces and look miserable and forlorn in their dilapidation. In the flower and vegetable gardens in front and by the sides of the cottages, barbed wire twists about in riotous confusion, giving joy to the scarlet runner and climbing rose which believe it has been put there for their convenience and glory.

Our automobiles, which had been traveling very fast, suddenly turned to the right and came to a stop a short way down a road running at right angles to the highway. A large screen across this road, hanging like a drop-curtain in a theatre, prevented our further progress. When we had alighted, the Colonel warned us not to show ourselves beyond the screen, for the German first-line trenches

## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

were but twelve hundred yards away, and we would be in plain sight of the German sharpshooters. With a deal of care and little noise, we made our way through a hole in the garden wall behind a demolished cottage. Regardless of the havoc in which the German shells had left the place, a few late flowers were blooming, pathetically recalling the days when the trim little garden was filled with color and perfume; the espalier trees against the wall were laden with fruit. A broken parrot-cage, formerly occupied by the green-coated pet of the family, hung from its nail. From the rear wall, against which the little tool house had been built, a few bricks had been removed at intervals of every five feet for the use of sharpshooters. Through the apertures we had a good view of the German trenches and of "No Man's Land"—that serpentine stretch of land which winds its way up and down, in and out, over four hundred miles of country from Switzerland to the North Sea, and which is bordered by the German and Austrian armies on the one side, and the French, English and Belgian armies on the other. It is the only land on earth to-day where man hesitates to set his foot.

In the gathering dusk we hurriedly pass through

## IN THE TRENCHES

a half-dozen gardens, in some of which the scythes, sickles, rakes and spades are hanging on their pegs in orderly array. The upper stories of the houses are entirely demolished; from broken windows, tattered lace curtains flap despondently in the rain like whipped sails on a deserted ship; and within the houses is piled a conglomerate mass of furniture, bedding and débris. A door creaks on its rusty hinges and in the cold rising wind the broken shutters rattle and slam.

In the last garden we come upon the beginning of one of the communicating trenches and dropping into it follow a zigzag course 'towards the front. On account of the porous soil, the trenches in this sector are in splendid condition. Though it had rained for several days, the trenches are not muddy. They are clean and well drained. Hanging from over the top as from a continuous window-box are innumerable vines and grasses, brightened here and there by the flaming red poppy and the small purple aster. I pick a few of the blossoms and press them in my notebook as I pass along.

From a machine-gun emplacement about fifteen hundred feet from the German first-line trench, we cautiously surveyed their position through our glasses. The long wavering line of light-colored



## JUST BEHIND THE FRONT IN FRANCE

earth easily marked the parapet of the enemy's trenches, but the absence of the sound or the sight of man or beast made it most difficult to believe that their trenches were occupied.

As there had been no serious activity in this sector for some time, "No Man's Land," by the help of the recent rains, had developed into a beautiful garden-meadow—innumerable red poppies sprinkling it as with drops of blood.

Darkness enveloped us as we left the trenches and began our chilly ride back to Châlons. The red lanterns of the sentries stopped us at frequent intervals but we were quickly allowed to proceed and in due time arrived at our destination hardly aware of our cold and hunger, so absorbed were we in the thoughts and memories of our amazing and unique journey.

. . . . .

We had come to the end. This was our last day in the war zone.

We had heard this war likened to a gladiatorial combat. But in ancient days the last farewell of the gladiator was, "We who are about to die salute thee!"

The France we were leaving, a transformed France which, with quickened vision and new





### "NO MAN'S LAND" THAT WAS

**N**O MAN'S LAND" that was, French soil once more—the Marne, where was fought the great battle which turned the Huns definitely back from the very gates of Paris. Thousands of lives were spent to recover for France these few yards of shell-torn waste and sorry earth. A regiment of French infantry is making its way through ruined trenches to their own new first-line trenches in front of the foe.



## IN THE TRENCHES

understanding, we had learned to love anew, was, we now knew, no mere gladiator.

Rather, out of the ashes of invading ruin and colossal adversity, she comes reborn, a Phoenix among the nations.

Even as we, departing, saw France, so will the whole world soon behold her—transfigured, glorified, unconquerable, deathless. Indeed, she *lives* because she *cannot die*.

Is it any wonder that, as the tears welled in our eyes, from our hearts came with one voice our parting words, “VIVE la France—la belle France!”

THE END





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